12: Douglas T-3 (1951)1953 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4

A Court in Lahul

December brings snow to the valleys. Thus Lahul is frozen tight most of the year. There is no place for much stock. A dzo or a cow or two is all a family has.

Even the independent farmers work land that usually is not theirs. They are largely squatters on government domain—families who have taken a likely-looking bench above a river, cleared it of rocks, and planted barley. Maybe the project prospered; more than likely it failed. And so one sees along the Chandra and the Bhaga grim outlines of old fields long forsaken. The family has moved on to another location, seeking brighter prospects.

I sat with my Sikh friend, Mahindar Singh Randhawa, the Tehsildar of Kyelang, as he held court at Jispa, fourteen miles above Kyelang. We sat in the open at a table on the edge of a stand of ancient juniper three or four feet in diameter while alpine choughs (glossy black with yellow beaks and red legs) soared overhead. Lahulis had come in from miles around for the court session. The men stood huddled around us, twisting their brimless and loosely woven wool caps. They were awed by the occasion—solemn and frightened too. This was the long arm of the law reaching out from remote Delhi to touch the lowliest of them. Their womenfolk and children had come to court with them. The women sat quietly in a circle on the perimeter of the court, knitting stockings and nursing babies. Women and children were also grim. There was no laughter in the crowd, no playfulness among the youngsters. This was the day of reckoning for their menfolk.

This court had no marshal, no court crier to announce it—no "oyez, oyez, oyez." The Tehsildar convened court by calling the names of the cases. The cases were actually *Punjab* vs. *Sonam*, *Punjab* vs. *Thundup*, *Punjab* vs. *Tsering*, etc. But this kind and warmhearted judge merely called the names of the farmers, and each replied. There were dozens of cases, and they took hours. The following is typical.

"Sonam, where is your farm?"

19: Asboe M-3 (no date) 1937 AJ4 W. Tibetans AJ4
Lahul

476 men or women to assist him in working his fields for a given number of days, he must on a subsequent occasion supply the equivalent in man power when called upon to do so.

The Farm Servant (*Len-mi*).

536 The more opulent farmers keep one or more
464 men or women as permanent servants. These
465 are employed from spring until autumn, their remuneration consisting of one piece of homespun cloth sufficient to make an outer garment, board and lodging, and a payment of 12 rupees at the expiration of their period of service. If the servant be a male, his allowance is the same as that given to a woman, with the exception that he receives double that amount of money (*i.e.*, 24 rupees). In some cases, however, the payment is entirely in kind.

233 *Village Shepherds* (*Lug-rdzi*).

● [422] Each village employs three shepherds to
464 pasture the communal flocks. These shepherds have, however, to perform subsidiary duties, such
621 as assisting each householder in building or repairing walls round the fields, ploughing and threshing.

When the harvest is gathered in, the shepherds make a house to house collection of barley and buckwheat. In addition to this they receive one fifth of the produce of wool from the communal flocks, which is divided amongst them equally.

Loans in Grain.

426 Many of the monastic institutions in Western
792 Tibet are very wealthy and increase their income by negotiating loans of grain to the poorer
241 peasants, taking interest at the rate of five measures for each kal of grain lent (*i.e.*, 10 lb. of grain for every 40 lb. lent, *viz.*, 25 per cent.). The result of this extortionate rate of interest is to put the poor farmer entirely in the hands of the priesthood, and rob him of every chance of increasing his annual output of crops through acquiring new farm implements or improving his land in other ways.

Manufacture of Beer.

273 The consumption of locally brewed beer from barley is very considerable, for at least one third of the annual yield of barley is converted into this liquor. Whilst it is difficult to estimate the exact quantity of barley used for the manufacture
273 of beer, the average would be roughly 20 *kals* of
439 barley per household (800 lb.) This means that the Lahouli has to import large quantities of